



Kimberly A. Foster  
Executive Director

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*COMMISSIONERS:*  
CAROL O. BIONDI  
PATRICIA CURRY  
ANN FRANZEN  
SUSAN F. FRIEDMAN  
HELEN A. KLEINBERG, CHAIR  
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY  
REV. CECIL L. MURRAY  
SANDRA RUDNICK, VICE CHAIR  
STACEY SAVELLE  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, VICE CHAIR  
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS  
TRULA J. WORTHY-CLAYTON

## APPROVED MINUTES

---

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **July 2, 2007**, in room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Susan F. Friedman  
Helen A. Kleinberg  
Rev. Cecil L. Murray  
Sandra Rudnick  
Stacey Savelle  
Adelina Sorkin  
Dr. Harriette F. Williams  
Trula J. Worthy-Clayton

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Carol O. Biondi  
Patricia Curry  
Ann E. Franzen  
Dr. La-Doris McClaney

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda for the July 2, 2007, meeting was unanimously approved.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 18, 2007, general meeting were unanimously approved.

The minutes of the June 18, 2007, special meeting were unanimously approved.

### CHAIR'S REPORT

- Chair Kleinberg thanked the Commissioners involved in drafting the letter to the Chief Executive Officer regarding the placement of the Department of Mental Health

within the clusters of the county's new governance structure, as well as the letter to the Board of Supervisors supporting the Children's Planning Council's recommendations for the juvenile justice system. Both letters have been sent.

- Commissioner Wendy Ramallo has resigned, leaving a First Supervisorial District seat vacant.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- Department of Children and Family Services director Trish Ploehn updated Commissioners on her senior staff recruiting. The executive search firm helping to fill the senior deputy director position should have five or six candidates available for interview within the next couple of weeks, and changes in service bureau leadership are now complete. Current service bureau leaders are:

- Joi Russell, service bureau 1
- Eric Marts, service bureau 2
- Amaryllis Watkins, service bureau 3
- Angela Carter, service bureau 4

Lisa Parrish is heading the waiver team, which consists of three DCFS and three Probation members; the team was approved last Tuesday as part of the county's agreement with Casey Family Programs. At Ms. Ploehn's invitation, Mr. Marts briefly reviewed his 31-year history of county service, more than 25 years of which has been with DCFS, most recently as regional administrator in Compton, where the point of engagement initiative was piloted. Service bureau 2 covers all of SPA 6, including the Hawthorne, Wateridge, Compton, and Central North offices, as well as the hotline and the command post. Mr. Marts looks forward to being part of Ms. Ploehn's team.

Paul Buehler, head of the new risk management division, has resigned to accept a position in New York; his last day will be July 31. Ms. Ploehn praised his work with the new division, noting that he is helping to identify candidates to fill the position.

- The bill legislating rate increases for caregivers has been shelved, but both the State Senate and the Assembly Appropriations Committee have approved a budget action to provide a 5 percent increase for relative caregivers, state-licensed foster homes, and group homes. (Foster family agencies are not included.) If the governor signs the provision, as expected, increases will take effect on January 1, 2008.
- Ms. Ploehn gave further details on the new DCFS Chatsworth office—formally known as the San Fernando Valley office—first announced at the Commission's June 18 meeting. Arrangements for the San Fernando Valley's 'one-stop shopping' facility fell through, and overcrowding at the Santa Clarita office necessitated the stop-gap measure of a five-year lease on the Chatsworth building. During that time, a search will be launched for a 'build to suit' property with appropriate square footage, sufficient parking, reasonable rent, and tenant improvement concessions.

Ms. Ploehn recognizes that, at Nordhoff Street near Winnetka Avenue, the facility is in the far western section of the catchment area. DCFS is working with agencies to arrange for meeting space elsewhere for team decision-making conferences and other appointments, so families won't have to travel long distances. An office in Van Nuys would be much more central, Vice Chair Sorkin said, noting that a bus ride across the San Fernando Valley can take as long as two hours. Regional administrator Dawna Yokoyama said that DCFS shares concerns about transportation, and worked diligently with the Chief Executive Office to locate a more central property; none could be found, however, that met both budgetary and space requirements. Four locations for the service center model—which would house 26 DCFS units and the Department of Public Social Services as primary tenants, surrounded by community-based organizations and Community and Senior Services—were also explored, and the old Olive View facility at Saticoy Street and Van Nuys Boulevard is now being discussed, although a youth organization would need to relocate for the space to be built out.

Sites for outstationed team decision-making conferences are being negotiated at the Boys and Girls Club in Pacoima, a facility at Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Vanowen Street, and at various elementary and middle schools and churches. Commissioner Savelle also suggested Los Angeles County public libraries, if their facilities are large enough and private enough. With an increased DCFS budget for bus tokens and bus passes, Ms. Yokoyama said, parents will be aided with transportation costs.

- Board letters regarding the approval of the Title IV-E waiver plan and the Casey Family Programs agreement were approved last Tuesday, and the waiver was entered into yesterday, July 1. Chair Kleinberg requested a joint presentation by DCFS and Casey Family Programs to explain how the various groups and staff that have planned the waiver implementation will now work together, and how the numerous initiatives identified will be sequenced out during future waiver phases. Commissioner Worthy-Clayton also requested a current estimate of the financial benefits projected from the waiver. Many of these questions will be answered at an all-day Learning Organization Group (LOG) event on Friday, July 27, and seats have been reserved for all Commission members. (Commissioners were asked to inform executive director Kimberly Foster or executive assistant Erin Campos if they plan to attend.)
- In response to Ms. Ploehn's solicitation of comments on a revised relative caregiver fact sheet, the Commission's consensus was that the document is still far too technical and intimidating in tone. Lara Holtzman from the Alliance for Children's Rights also expressed her concerns about the form's accuracy and its user-friendliness. As originally suggested by Commissioner Curry, the document is meant to provide relatives with easy-to-understand information about the steps they must take to be formally approved as relative caregivers. Commissioner Williams will present the fact sheet at the kinship cabinet's July 23 meeting and ask parents and other stakeholders, including Alliance representatives, for their input. Commissioner Savelle also volunteered to help with revisions.

### **KATIE A. UPDATE**

Dr. Charles Sophy, DCFS medical director, promised Commissioners an executive summary of the revised Katie A. corrective action plan, ordered by the court in November 2006, which goes before the Board of Supervisors on July 17. The new version contains several modifications to the initial plan.

- **Expand and coordinate up-front assessments to target children at risk of entering the system**, as well as newly detained children and those already receiving services, who are screened at the medical hubs. A major augmentation of staff will be necessary to address this new population, said Sandra Thomas from the Department of Mental Health, as screenings are now voluntary, or occur further down the line, for children with open cases or those in family maintenance, voluntary family maintenance, or family preservation programs.

On first contact, children's social workers will administer a California Institute for Mental Health (CIMH) screening, a two- to three-minute small questionnaire specifically designed to be administered by a lay person. If 'red flags' appear, positive screenings will be sent to DCFS offices with co-located DMH staff. Systems navigators will then link children to further assessments for mental health issues, and some may see multidisciplinary assessment teams (MATs). DMH is expecting to hire more systems navigators and to expand the capacity of its contracted and directly operated providers to manage those referrals. Children reached by the new prevention initiative will go through normal channels and be referred to DMH clinics, and Dr. Sophy will consult with Harvey Kawasaki, DCFS's point person for the prevention initiative, on ways to build that connection.

- **Revamp DCFS's longstanding resource utilization management (RUM) unit** to better match the needs of children for placements at various levels—group homes, hospitals, D rate homes, etc.—and to better coordinate with co-located DMH staff, D rate teams, and Regional Center teams. DMH would also like to see an additional clinical psychologist in the RUM unit. The RUM process, which is triggered by team decision-making conferences or any other change in a detained child's needs, will also focus on dependency children who cross over into the juvenile justice system.
- **Expand intensive in-home services, including wraparound and therapeutic foster care.** A Board letter is being prepared that delineates the staffing needs and financing timeline for this expansion, mostly paid for by EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment, a Federal program), but also requiring some matching dollars. According to the November court order, wraparound slots must be increased to 500 and intensive therapeutic foster care slots to 300. (Ongoing EPSDT billing problems have primarily focused on MAT assessments; for wraparound and therapeutic foster care, no snags are expected.)
- **Establish a 24-hour crisis management system to better address the needs of children in foster family agency homes.** Ms. Thomas reported working with the

Katie A. oversight panel, the courts, and plaintiffs' attorneys to build a crisis stabilization team for foster family agencies, an issue not originally addressed in the lawsuit's October 2005 corrective action plan. Teams would include both parent advocates and clinicians, and provide mediation on-site or at DMH clinics to prevent psychiatric hospitalization. At present, a SPA 6 program that began as a 23-hour crisis center has evolved to an urgent care center, and provides only two beds for adolescents. Dr. Astrid Heger, at the LAC+USC VIP medical hub, is considering establishing another center for the adolescent population.

Unfortunately, the hiring requirements of the crisis management teams are in competition with those of the full-service partnerships, and the potential employee pool is shallow. Some planning dollars for workforce training and education are expected soon from the Mental Health Services Act, and both DCFS and DMH are enhancing their relationships with local universities' schools of psychology and social work, offering incentives—tuition reimbursement, for example—for students to enter county service after graduation.

- **Improve training for both DCFS and DMH staff by using evidence-based models.**

#### **REVISED TITLE IV-E WAIVER PLAN**

In the absence of Jitahadi Imara, Carol Sanchez introduced the Probation Department's Title IV-E waiver director, Kathy New, who explained the massive restructuring within that department's juvenile placement system to support the waiver and its efforts. Probation is implementing two initiatives:

- **Cross-systems assessments** in all three juvenile halls will allow clinical psychologists, education specialists, and probation officers to perform in-depth assessments of youth that will lead to better initial placements and treatment plans. The Board of Supervisors will be approached in September to approve this initiative, and it is due to begin in October.

Because large numbers of probation youth come from the DCFS system, Chair Kleinberg asked about DCFS's role in these assessment teams. Ms. Sanchez said that if the Probation Department's computer system identifies youth as having been with DCFS, the assessment team will connect with the child's former social worker (something that has not always happened in the past). In addition, the dual-status protocols being piloted in the Pasadena delinquency court will provide further information on cross-over youth, and education efforts—though they are not part of the waiver—are being pursued with trainings at DCFS regional offices for social workers and multidisciplinary team members on youth at risk for crossing over.

- **Multisystemic therapy and family-functioning therapy programs**, which work with families as well as youth, began in June and currently target approximately 45 youth per month who are released from group homes. Within the waiver's first fiscal year, family functioning therapy slots are planned to increase to 125. Ms. Sanchez

will meet July 19 with court bench officers to make a presentation on these programs, which require that families be willing to have youth at home and to participate in the therapy. Even when parents are resistant at the outset, Ms. New said, staff can often turn that attitude around. Probation is working with the waiver's state evaluator to arrange a mini-study showing the effects of these services.

Commissioner Worthy-Clayton expressed her hope that the Probation Department would continue to work closely enough with the Commission to apprise Commissioners of opportunities for them to participate in presentations and other meetings. Ms. New said that Commissioners are always welcome, and that Probation would be part of the LOG meeting on July 27.

### **LOS ANGELES COUNTY GOVERNANCE**

Bryce Yokomizo, former director of the Department of Public Social Services and now a deputy Chief Executive Officer, presented on the new administrative governance structure for Los Angeles County. Although a confirming charter amendment will go before voters in June 2008, the new structure was fully put into place as of July 1, 2007.

Under the previous structure, 34 departments reported directly to the five-member Board of Supervisors, leading to a reactive form of government that Mr. Yokomizo called "management by the *Los Angeles Times*." Until a problem became a matter for the media, little prevention or management of issues took place, and few incentives existed for departments to help one another in times of crisis. The goals of the new structure are:

- Improved accountability
- Customer-focused, integrated services
- Better communication
- Increased interdepartmental collaboration
- Continuous process and organizational improvement

With the new governance model, constituent requests to the Board of Supervisors are handled as they always have been, but the Chief Administrative Officer has become the Chief Executive Officer, with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Board about the hiring, performance, and firing of department heads. A chief deputy CEO and five deputy CEOs work collaboratively, within and across clusters of departments and other county bodies, to achieve the goals set forth in the county's strategic plan.

Chair Kleinberg voiced the Commission's primary objection to the cluster arrangement: that separating mental health and probation from the children and families' well-being cluster does not serve children and families. Commissioners fought in the early 1990s to separate DCFS from the Department of Public Social Services because adult issues overwhelmed those of children, and a similar situation has once again been created. She fears that the structure will not encourage employees to look beyond their individual MAPP (Management Appraisal and Performance Plan) goals or departmental objectives to bring needed services together. Mr. Yokomizo acknowledged those concerns, saying that Commissioners would be right to worry if the new structure were only about boxes and lines.

However, the key to its success is the commitment of departments to work together toward the well-being of children. The size of the Department of Health Services and its vast hospital system may dictate that it operate within one cluster, but the Department of Mental Health is part of that same cluster, and Commissioners believe that children's mental health issues will be lost. Mr. Yokomizo cited the case of DCFS and Probation's successful collaboration on the Title IV-E waiver plan, without the support of the new county structure, and also mentioned the clerical assistance and other help given to DCFS by DPSS with regard to reducing the recent backlog of Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) home inspections.

Those examples notwithstanding, Vice Chair Rudnick raised the long-waged fight against 'silos' in county services, saying that the lines and boxes of the new structure certainly look like a resurgence of those silos. Mr. Yokomizo admitted that, on paper, they might, but reiterated the need for department heads and administrators to work across clusters, despite their existence seeming to be what Vice Chair Rudnick characterized as a perfect excuse *not* to work together. Maintaining that the commitment to collaboration is there, Mr. Yokomizo related a recent incident in which DCFS wished to discontinue a contract. This is usually a long process, but with children at stake, Mr. Yokomizo (who is deputy CEO over the children and families cluster) and Ms. Ploehn worked with the operations cluster to get clearance for a process waiver, and a new contract is now in place that benefits children. Departments are no longer on their own, he said, but in a structure in which everyone's talking to each other, a move that makes sense can trump a drawn-out bureaucratic process.

In response to a query from Commissioner Williams regarding the placement of the Human Relations Commission—but not the Commission for Children and Families—within the children and families cluster, Mr. Yokomizo explained that the Human Relations Commission is actually a county department with a formal department head. As the last slide of his presentation makes clear, an outside consultant will evaluate each of the 201 commissions of Los Angeles County government, considering possible consolidation or reconfiguration. According to Mr. Yokomizo, the Commission for Children and Families is one of the premier commissions in the county, and will not be eliminated.

Mr. Yokomizo continued his presentation, outlining the internal structure of the CEO's office to achieve the goals of service excellence, workforce excellence, and fiscal accountability. He then summarized the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive Office, Board deputies—whose office configurations vary widely according to individual district—and department heads. At Chair Kleinberg's prompting, he promised to include the integration of services under the responsibilities of department heads and Board deputies, as it is under the CEO's responsibilities already ("facilitate integration").

Customer-focused policy will be developed through a public process involving stakeholders, and the CEO will analyze policies in terms of budget concerns, legality, legislative impact, and personnel issues. Budgets will be developed through work across clusters to maximize revenues. Board of Supervisors agendas will be streamlined through the

use of a consent agenda, consolidating items on which there is no discussion, and the Board will hold periodic meetings devoted to single-issue policy discussions whose topics will be decided through the policy planning process. Cross-cutting issues such as gangs and homelessness will require integration with city efforts and those of other government agencies, which Mr. Yokomizo admitted has not been very successful in the past. Although the CEO is now responsible for preparing Board letters and agendas, Mr. Yokomizo assured the Commission that it could continue to write to the Board directly.

Vice Chair Rudnick commented that the new cluster structure relies overmuch on the goodwill of employees in various departments; she is experienced enough within county government to know that this doesn't always work. She views the silos as so pervasive that they could cause great difficulties in crossing lines on the organizational chart. Mr. Yokomizo sees the new structure as a significant improvement on the old way of doing things, and said that the Economy and Efficiency Commission would be evaluating the new procedures. Departments are aware that integration is necessary, he said, and the county is in its best condition to date in that regard.

Mr. Yokomizo postponed his retirement from county service, originally planned for last March, to accept the position of deputy CEO for the children and families' well-being cluster. At the time, he committed to staying as long as CEO David Janssen—who also postponed his retirement to develop the new governance structure—remained in his post. Mr. Janssen has announced that, in Mr. Yokomizo's words, "he's going on vacation as of July 18 and not coming back," and the Board of Supervisors plans to interview candidates for his successor on July 10. Mr. Yokomizo will stay until the new CEO is on board, but will leave before the end of the calendar year. Commissioners expressed alarm that the success of the new structure depends so much on people no one knows, but Mr. Yokomizo has every confidence that the new CEO will have a strong commitment to collaboration and integration. Chair Kleinberg asked that he please tell his successor of the Commission's concerns that the new cluster structure does not sufficiently support children and families.

Chair Kleinberg thanked the other presenters on today's agenda for their willingness, in the interests of time, to appear at the next Commission meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

#### **MEETING ADJOURNED**